

Assemblyman **PAUL KORETZ**

Forty-second Assembly District

proudly representing the communities of West Hollywood, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, Century City, Westwood, Bel Air, Brentwood, West Los Angeles, Hollywood, Hancock Park, Universal City, Studio City, and Sherman Oaks



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Contact: Teresa Stark
916-319-2042
916-715-2203 (cell)

Koretz' Legislation to Regulate the .50 Caliber Sniper Rifle Passes First Policy Committee

Hearing Underscores Potential Terrorism Threat of the .50 BMG Rifle

(Sacramento) – Legislation authored by Assemblyman Koretz to regulate the sale and possession of the .50 BMG rifle easily passed out of its first policy committee today.

If enacted, Assembly Bill 50 would make it unlawful to manufacture, sell distribute, import, or possess a .50 BMG rifle within the State of California without a permit after January 1, 2004. Any person who owns a .50 BMG prior to enactment of this bill would be allowed to keep the weapon if they register it within 180 days.

"The .50 BMG rifle is among the most destructive and powerful weapons legally available in the United States," said Koretz. "This weapon was used by the military in the Gulf War to take out armored personnel vehicles. It is one of the U.S. military's highest-powered sniper rifles, capable of ripping through armored limousines and military personnel carriers at a distance of 2000 yards, the length of 20 football fields. It is deadly accurate at up to a mile and effective at more than 4 miles.

"Yet, current law classifies .50 BMG guns as "rifles" subject to the least government regulation for any firearm," noted Koretz. "Sawed-off shotguns and handguns are more highly regulated than this military sniper rifle. I think that the public would be shocked to know that any 18-year-old high school student with a valid driver's license could purchase this deadly weapon. At a minimum, these dangerous weapons should be regulated like assault weapons, which require a permit to possess one."

At the hearing, law enforcement representatives, community organizations, local government, gun violence prevention advocates, and firearm experts, testified to the potential dangers of allowing civilians unregulated access to the .50 BMG rifle.

"The .50 BMG rifle poses an easily obtainable and inexpensive threat to our infrastructure in the hands of terrorists," noted Andres Soto, Policy Director of the Trauma Foundation. "It is easy to see a potential Bhopal should these weapons continue to be allowed in civilian hands.

"It was apparent from the testimony presented today that there is widespread support for regulating the sale of this military style weapon," said Koretz.

"I believe that we can no longer be complacent about the easy availability of a weapon that could be employed to cause massive carnage at civilian airports, chemical and nuclear facilities and other key infrastructure points in our country."

"Even for the casual "target shooter" these weapons pose a threat to society," noted KorteZ. "The bullets from these weapons travel at a tremendous velocity and can continue to travel a great distance after passing through their target, he concluded."

Exempted from the provisions of this legislation would be full-time peace officer members of a police department, sheriff's department, marshal's office, or district attorney's office, the California Highway Patrol, the Department of Justice and the Department of Correction's Special Emergency Response Teams and Law Enforcement Liaison/Investigations Unit.

In addition to California, five other states--Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts and New York and Virginia, also are considering legislation to regulate the .50 BMG rifle.

Assemblyman Koretz is Chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Gun Violence, which originally held a hearing on the potential dangers of the .50 BMG rifle in February of 2002.

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